

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04072 192101Z

ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4930

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4072

NODIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, IS, LE

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 6078, (B) BEIRUT 4034

1. I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON
REF A.

2. FIRST, ALTHOUGH MORALE OF CHRISTIAN FIGHTERS IN SOUTH
LEBANON MAY BE WEAKENING AS BEGIN ASSERTS, (PARA 3, REF A),
THEIR ACTIONS ON THE GROUND DO NOT SUPPORT THIS CONTENTION.
CHRISTIANS AND ISRAELIS SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN THE INITIATIVE AT
LEAST AS OFTEN AS PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE LEFTISTS IN
STARTING EXCHANGES OF ARTILLERY FIRE DURING PAST TEN DAYS.
ONE EYEWITNESS OBSERVER TOLD OUR DATT THAT ON AUGUST 17 AT
LEAST FIVE TIMES AS MANY SHELLS FELL ON THE PALESTINIAN-HELD
TOWN OF NABATIYAH AS WERE FIRED FROM PALESTINIAN SIDE. IN
ADDITION, CHRISTIAN PLANNING, IN COOPERATION WITH ISRAELIS,
FOR ATTACK ON NAQURA INDICATES THEY HAVE NOT LOST ALL
THEIR AGGRESSIVENESS. ISRAELI TALK OF CHRISTIAN NEED
FOR A SUPPLY LINE AND BASHIR GEMAYEL'S RECENT COMMENTS
ABOUT TAKING NAQURA MADE ME FEAR JUST SUCH AN ATTACK

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MIGHT BE COMING (PARA 4, BEIRUT 4018), BUT PROMPT
ACTION BY DEPT AND WHITE HOUSE APPARENTLY FORESTALLED
IT

3. SECOND, AT A LUNCHEON ON AUG 18, BOTH PRESIDENTIAL
ADVISOR KHALIL HADDAD AND GENERAL KHOURY TOLD DCM THEY
THOUGHT ISRAELIS WERE DELIBERATELY KEEPING THE POT

BOILING IN THE SOUTH. LEBANESE ASSERTIONS IN THIS REGARD MUST OF COURSE BE TREATED WITH RESERVE, BUT IT IS AT LEAST CONCEIVABLE ISRAELIS MAY NOT THINK IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO HAVE A PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN-GOL RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. SO FAR, ISRAEL HAS BENEFITED IN VARIOUS WAYS FROM LEBANESE CIVIL WAR, AND IT MAY HAVE VESTED INTEREST NOW IN PREVENTING SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD LEAVE PALESTINIANS IN PLACE IN SOUTH LEBANON.

4. THIRD, EVERYONE TALKS OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT THESE DAYS BUT NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT IT MEANS. BASICALLY, PHASE 3 OF THIS AGREEMENT WAS INTENDED TO BE AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE CAIRO ACCORD OF 1969 IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THIS IS NO GREAT HELP, HOWEVER, SINCE THE CAIRO ACCORD ITSELF IS FULL OF AMBIGUITIES AND IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT THE PARTIES ARE AGREED ON EXACTLY HOW MANY PALESTINIAN FORCES ARE ALLOWED TO BE WHERE. UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WILL TAKE TIME, PATIENCE AND GOOD WILL BY LEBANESE, PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS BEFORE AN ACTUAL MODUS VIVENDI ON THE GROUND IS WORKED OUT. THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS ARE LIKELY TO BE A PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE AND DANGEROUS TIME. ISRAELI ATTITUDE DURING THIS TIME IS GOING TO BE CRUCIAL: IF THEY SHOW RESTRAINT, MODUS VIVENDI MAY BE POSSIBLE, BUT IF THEY GIVE IN TO BASHIR GEMAYEL'S
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URGINGS ABOUT NAQURA, THE SITUATION CAN ONLY GET WORSE.

5. SUGGEST DEPT PASS DAMASCUS AND TEL AVIV.
PARKER

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NNN

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